

A fruitful soil: what coaches can learn from how theatre directors in rehearsal create a learning environment

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Abstract

This grounded theory study looks at how theatre directors in rehearsal create a learning environment and considers what coaches can learn. It identifies some of the factors involved in creating a learning environment in both theatre rehearsal and coaching: factors such as managing processes, managing relationships and overcoming goal impasse. It also explores the influence of intuition. The study reinforces what coaching and the helping professions have known about relationships, but may not have put into action, including the importance of rapport. It also highlights a number of other factors that are understood by theatre directors, but which may also, if adopted by coaches, enhance the learning environments that they create.

Key Words: Coaching, theatre directors, rehearsals, learning environment, relationships

Introduction

The Father in “Six Characters in Search of an Author” (Pirandello, 1993, pp. 79–80) described how characters such as Sancho Panza and Prospero were “living seeds [who] had the luck to find a fruitful soil, an imagination which knew how to grow them and feed them, so that they will live forever”. Our coaching clients are living seeds. As coaches, I believe we have an obligation to create an environment conducive to nurturing our clients, a learning environment.

The coaching environment I create is the product not only of my coaching training, reading, experience and inspiration from my clients’ feedback, but also is rooted in my background in the theatre. My coaching style, my “signature presence” (O’Neill, 2000), incorporates and reflects this; hence my interest in examining, qualitatively, what coaches can learn from how theatre directors in rehearsal create a learning environment.

This paper is an account of my exploration. After reviewing literature on the learning environment in the next section, I outline my methodology and then present the findings of the study through four inter-related themes: managing process; managing relationships; goal impasse and intuition.

Learning Environment

I began the study by reviewing the literature to clarify my understanding of what constitutes a “fruitful soil”: the learning environment. Vella identified the need for both safety in the environment and also a sound relationship between teacher and learner for the learning to be successful (Vella, 2002, pp. 3-32). Humanist literature exhorted a belief in the potential of the learner “expressed in attitudes and behaviors that create a growth-producing climate” (Corey, 2001, p. 166). The need for self-actualisation, “to become everything that one is

capable of becoming” (Maslow, 1987, p. 22) pin-pointed what could result from creating a learning environment in both rehearsal and coaching.

I also examined theatre literature, including the writings of and about directors who changed the nature of the rehearsal process (Stanislavski, 1967; Braun, 1983; Brook, 1987; Mitter, 1992), to investigate how they had created a learning environment. Although these identified the relationship between director and actor, and provided evidence of the need for trust, I did not find specific references to or explorations of the learning environment itself. However, Roose-Evans (1968, p. 23) stressed “the good director generates an atmosphere within which the actor is able to relax and discover for himself”, which parallels “the active and collaborative participation of both the coach and the client” expressed by the concept of co-active coaching (Whitworth et al, 1998). Clutterbuck (2003, p. 3) summarised a learning environment from the perspective of “the facilitator of learning [who] creates *the climate, in which the maximum relevant learning can take place*”. I used this definition to steer my exploration.

Methodology

Grounded theory was chosen as the methodological approach and analytic process. Grounded theory enabled me to incorporate and analyse the mixed methods used to collect the primary data. It also allowed me to use my experience as a source of critical evaluation to interpret the data and work towards formulating theory, there being no apparent theory in existence. In addition, it encouraged reliability and validity by its rigorous approach where data is investigated by constant questioning and re-questioning from different angles to verify initial observations: “We have to challenge our assumptions, delve beneath our experience, and look beyond the literature if we are to uncover phenomena and arrive at new theoretical formulations” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 76).

Literature from theatre, coaching and the helping professions had aided my enquiry into the nature of the learning environment and provided a backdrop against which I expanded my understanding of these disciplines. Grounded theory then helped me to make links and recognise and challenge the assumptions I might be making as concepts emerged from the data. It also reflected my need to “set free whatever degree of creative ability and theoretical sensitivity [I] have” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 94). The choice of methodology also guided how I collected the data.

The very nature of theatre rehearsals and coaching sessions require privacy and confidentiality, where participants can explore and develop whilst working through the accompanying doubts and anxieties before facing the public, whether in the auditorium or an organisation’s workplace. I therefore, collected my data, not from being part of or observing rehearsals and coaching sessions, but rather from face-to-face interviews with two experienced directors and two cast members. Two experienced coaches and two of their clients supplied me with email responses to interview questions. In addition, I had the benefit of one actor’s diary and that of one of the coaching clients. These 8 participants provided me with a wealth of data from which emerged how they managed process, relationships and overcoming goal impasse, often through using intuition, and how constraints, such as time, affected the learning environment.

Robson asserts that interviews are the “most common data collection method in grounded theory studies” (2002, p. 191) and following guidelines and to be true to the grounded theory approach, I designed the questions to be open-ended. I decided on a semi-structured interview format in order to provide focus and give the opportunity to use supplementary questions should the need arise for expansion or clarification. For consistency, I designed the interview questions to be relevant to the directors, the coaches, the actors, and coaching

clients involved in the study. Furthermore, I crafted the questions to be unambiguous, having the same weight and meaning whether spoken or read, in case, as it transpired, I could not conduct face-to-face interviews with the coaches and their clients. Most of my interview questions were “experience/behaviour questions” (Patton, 1990, p. 348), such as how the learning environment was created and what influenced its success; others were concerned with what the directors/coaches did, said or felt; others were related to goals and how they set and managed them; others were to do with the dynamics of rehearsals or coaching sessions. However, I also included questions to help me understand what influences had informed the participants’ answers, and to provide context and texture for my analysis. I placed these after the main body of the interview so they would not detract from the most important aspects of the data I hoped to collect. If time pressures intervened, I could omit them. Further rich sources of material were the diary that one actor offered to write for me to capture the day-to-day experience of her rehearsals, and a session entry from one of the coaching client’s reflective journals.

Findings and Discussion

The data revealed that both the directors and the coaches had to manage similar issues including **managing process**, **managing relationships** and **goal impasse** in order to create a learning environment. Both tended to rely on **intuition**, particularly when challenged by constraints that threatened to disturb the learning environment. These four issues are discussed separately below. Respondents’ names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

1. *Managing Process - time and preparation*

Both the directors and the coaches created a learning environment through managing process. Pearsall (1998, p. 1477) defined process as “A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end”. By ‘managing’ the process I mean how the director and coach facilitate the course of the rehearsal or coaching session to its successful goal.

Time emerged as a powerful constraint on process. One director, Charles, identified that “time management is really a key part of the director’s job”. He usually had six weeks rehearsal, plus his own preparation time, whereas the other director, Florence had merely five days, plus a short personal preparation period, to create a performance that would initiate a stately home theatre festival. The time constraint influenced how they both prepared and the effect on the learning environment. At one extreme there could be too much time:

I’ve had twelve weeks ... it’s interesting that no-one learnt their lines properly and people dried in the previews a lot because they couldn’t see an end to the rehearsals, so there was no ... discipline.

(Charles’s interview)

This reflected Shaffer’s opinion, when he described his “breakthrough strategy” for using short-term success to build high performance, that “the evidence is overwhelming that human enthusiasm and energy is aroused most by goals that can be obtained quickly” (1988, p. 31).

Time constraints also influenced the directors’ preparation process. Charles’s preparation included visiting the location where the real life events dramatised in the play had taken place. Sarah, one of his actors, recorded in her diary that Charles had collected and displayed resources from which the actors could learn “like the old fashioned ‘nature’ table of primary school” (Sarah’s diary). This preparation and communication of previously gathered information created a richness of understanding and shared meaning for the cast. Florence, however, found that her actors had developed fixed interpretations of both character and play

while learning their lines independently before the short rehearsal period. This influenced both process and relationships negatively during rehearsal. Florence was forced to impose her views thus creating conflict and a less collaborative learning environment than she usually provided. She was unable to be flexible in her planning and therefore drew up a tight schedule: “It was a question of time and I thought the best thing to do was to approach it exactly like I would a television production” (Florence’s interview). Florence knew the actors had “never done it in such a short space”. Stuart, one of her actors, reflected this in his descriptions ranging from learning lines to the intensity of his performance anxiety. “It’s like an edge, I wouldn’t call it fear, but its pretty close ... which gives your performance a different kind of energy” (Stuart’s interview).

Similarly, the coaches were affected by the length of time and number of coaching sessions. Mary, an international music coach, noted:

For the first session it is important to have at least one and a half hours available. If one knows the client from previous sessions, one can work in different time-scales without too much difficulty. (*Mary’s email response*)

And she was aware that both the external time-scale and the inner journey of the client contributed to the learning environment.

I sense the client is at a point when they have assimilated enough and need time for their own processing to continue (at the unconscious level). (*Mary’s email response*)

Greg, a career coach, noted the constraints that limited finance placed on time:

In today’s climate – corporate paying sponsors tend to try and get away with the very minimum. I have often had to work with a one 60 minute one to one session or two 60 minute sessions. (*Greg’s email response*)

Their preparation, however, was not explored in depth although the importance of preparing oneself emerged from the data. Mary identified both emotion and expertise as relevant:

Make sure I’m in a calm, open focussed state. If appropriate, I may remind myself of particular strategies beforehand which I think may be helpful, and/or relevant to the particular client. (*Mary’s email response*)

Mary’s work on her “state” reflects Flaherty’s exhortation that coaches are “able to speak about how we are now, in a way that allows for coaching to occur” (1999, p. 22), which contributes to the climate of learning. It also prepared her for Flaherty’s fourth principle “that clients are always and already in the middle of their lives” (1999, p. 12) and how this might affect her client, Bruce’s, learning. In fact he and his wife had just had a baby: “She asked about my recent life, showed caring” (Bruce’s diary).

2. *Managing Relationships - environment, rapport, omissions and endings*

Relationships and how they are managed emerged as fundamental to creating a learning environment. Relationship is “the way in which two or more ... people are connected” (Pearsall, 1998, p. 1566) and is a dynamic process requiring sophisticated use of a range of skills. The influence of the environment, rapport and how the participants experienced endings, provided evidence of how directors and coaches managed relationships.

George Bernard Shaw reminded us “that no strangers should be present at rehearsal ... Rehearsals are absolutely and sacredly confidential” (Cole, 1992, p. 2). This is partly tradition, but a tradition that reflects the vulnerability of actors in their exploration and transition into their roles. Charles, the director who had six weeks rehearsal, identified the connection between the physical space and how relationship develops. “It’s often to do with things like ... the social space ... like where we can sit and have a cup of coffee, can we actually relate to one another” (Charles’s interview). In contrast, Florence, who had only five days in which to rehearse, found herself rehearsing outdoors, using the space that would later become the stage. “I sat on the lawn, and then there was a terrace and steps and ... types of buildings, with trees beyond ... it was just ideal” (Florence’s interview). However, this physical environment necessitated using microphones and “none of the cast wanted to wear them ... but it became essential” (Florence’s interview). Hence the constraints of the physical environment caused conflict affecting the relationship. For a while, this disturbed the learning environment. The significance of the physical rehearsal and performance space has been well documented in literature on theatre (Brook, 1972; Grotowski, 1994, among others) as providing the duality of safety and the challenge to fill it.

For Greg, the career coach, the environment was not too important. “As long as coach and client are happy – even coffee bars will do” (Greg’s email response). However, this may compromise confidentiality and inhibit intuitive responses to the client. As Claxton emphasised, “the outer contextual conditions (for developing intuition) include a conducive physical environment” (Atkinson and Claxton, 2003, p. 48). Greg’s “preferred professional ideal”, however, is “a quiet ‘one to one’ or small meeting room with no external distractions” (Greg’s email response). Mary echoed this sentiment: “A quiet, undisturbed environment” (Mary’s email response). Her client, Bruce, described when they worked in “a spacious room, very nice piano, I did feel confident to achieve” (Bruce’s email response).

However, neither director nor coach can create an effective learning environment without developing rapport with the actors or clients. Charles, the director who had six weeks rehearsal period, noted the benefit of having control over his casting. When selecting the cast he used the criteria of “fifty percent suitability and fifty percent rapport” because he needed to “respond to what actors give me, I respond to the relationship and the rapport with the actor” (Charles’s interview). His actor, Sarah, noted that he created “an easy, comfortable atmosphere” (Sarah’s diary) conducive to encouraging development.

Florence’s experience of developing rapport was countered by several constraints in developing her relationship with the actors, particularly lack of time and the producer’s sole control over the main characters’ casting. There was an urgency, too, that intensified the relationships: “we had to gel as one ... particular group of people ... because we were going to be with each other very closely” (Florence’s interview). Also the level of fear was higher, which can discourage exploration and independence (Vella, 2002, pp. 8-10). Florence also had to abandon her preferred collaborative style of working and be more directive.

Literature from the helping professions and coaching supports the importance of the relationship in enabling development to occur (Egan, 2002; Rogers, 1995; Rogers, 2004; Whitworth et al, 1998). Indeed, Winnicott refined the importance of a holding relationship (Winnicott, 1986; 1987) and acknowledged the vulnerability of the client/patient when approaching a process involving change. Jenny Rogers also related the coaching client’s fears of change “because coaching is about change and to change you do make yourself vulnerable” (2004, p. 6): hence the importance of establishing rapport in order “to relate to others in a way that creates a climate of trust and understanding” (Knight, 1997, p. 122).

Mary, the music performance coach, described how she establishes an appropriate relationship for learning to take place. "I create rapport and listen to the client, noticing language used, also body language" (Mary's email response). Her client, Bruce, confirmed this: "She established good rapport with me and brought me to a good state to learn" (Bruce's email response). His diary indicated how she did this: "she completely jumps into the student's world, experiences what her student is experiencing and uses her instinct to coach that student", which resulted in "immediately I felt comfortable and easily able to communicate with her" (Bruce's diary). Greg, who mainly engages in career coaching, described his approach: "Always open, non judgmental, welcoming, if possible free of personal baggage" (Greg's email response). This was reflected by his client, Harry, as "very warm and created an environment which encouraged open and frankness" (Harry's email response). Hence both coaches established "a vehicle for social-emotional relearning", a "Working Alliance", in which the helper and client collaborate (Egan, 2002, pp. 43-44).

However, something omitted from the data regarding relationships was any reference to the status or authority of the director. Marowitz, has written about "the power drives of the director" (1986, p. xvi), suggesting "The director is a self-obsessed colonizer who wishes to materialize power through harnessing and shaping the powers of others". Certainly, there is a generally unspoken imbalance in the relationship dynamic as the director usually selects the actors, although both have the power to terminate an unsuccessful relationship as do a coach and client. However, Michael Blakemore believed that "the actor is ultimately in charge" because when the play is in performance "it's the actor finally up there calling the shots" (Coveney, 2006, p. 51).

Some directors, such as Charles, create a learning environment of relative equality by being collaborative in his search for knowledge and shared meaning in parallel with the actors. He does this through managing the relationships involved. This echoed the concept of a "developmental alliance" from mentoring literature. Hay (1999, p. 3) defined this approach as:

a relationship between equals in which one or more of those involved is enabled to: increase awareness, identify alternatives and initiate action to develop themselves.

Vella, too, noted the importance of understanding the effect of power in educational relationships and the importance of establishing "respect and affirmation in a safe environment" (Vella, 2002, p. 86). However, neither of the coaches referred to the imbalance in power.

The need to manage the ending of relationships also emerged from the rehearsal data. The aim of both theatre rehearsal and coaching is to achieve independent performance. In theatre rehearsal this requires the ending of the actors' dependency on the director, and the director has to disengage from the relationship with the actors and manage that appropriately. For Charles the release came at a point when he felt "that you've taken it to a certain level" (Charles's interview). From Sarah's diary, I obtained a sense of how he gradually let go during the later rehearsals and five previews:

[He] thanked everyone for an enjoyable six weeks ... he felt it was in a g. state ... he thought we were confident – clearly told the story ... We are an amazing co. We listen to him and then act on notes ... He is proud already.
(Sarah's diary)

This culminated before the press night when he told the cast:

What an enjoyable experience it had been for him. Actors committed, felt we'd been drawn together because of the play and what it stands for and how important it is and relevant to what is happening now. (*Sarah's diary*)

My interpretation of this phase was of a proud parent releasing his offspring into the world, a metaphor echoed by Simon Callow:

The director's job ... is parental. In the early stages of rehearsal, he must flood you with amniotic fluid, then as the performance begins to take shape, he has to guide, nurture, offer himself as buffer, sometimes disciplining, but always respecting, your individuality. It's as difficult a job as parenthood, and one as little appreciated by the beneficiary. (*Callow, 1985, p. 175*)

From a Gestalt perspective, "Maturing is the transcendence from environmental support to self-support" (Perls, 1969, p. 28), which in rehearsal development alligns to "the ripening of the actor" (Grotowski, 1994, p. 16).

In contrast, Florence's experience of disengaging from the actors was constrained by the time-frame within which she worked and the subsequent incomplete character development and disparate interpretations of the play by the actors. Consequently she had difficulty in letting go:

For the three performances that we did ... we were still moving through the process, so we were still working, we were still rehearsing ... so we constantly had notes after each performance. But I think on the last one she just let us go with it. (*Stuart's interview*)

She also had the additional pressure of directing a play in an unrealistic time-frame up to a performance standard that would start off an annual theatre festival in a stately home.

Whitmore (1995) asserted that one of the fundamentals of coaching is working towards goals. This implies that the relationship may end when the goals are achieved. However, the coaches and clients I studied were still in a continuous coaching relationship and, therefore, did not express how they had ended the current relationship. Jenny Rogers, however, likes "to mark the final session with a review" (Rogers, 2004, p. 227) and an email or letter. In my experience, particularly with clients I have identified as potentially dependent, I manage the ending of the relationship starting several sessions from the end, by clarifying goals and time-frames and helping the client identify other forms of support should they be necessary, as well as focusing on independent continuous development.

3. *Goal Impasse*

How the participants managed their actors' and clients' goal impasse, or 'stuckness', again reflected the time constraints. Charles was able to explore difficulties when actors became stuck because he had a reasonable amount of rehearsal time. Charles used techniques such as "stopping them thinking about what they were doing" and "getting it out of the head" by doing physical activities (Charles's interview). Sarah confirmed this: "Played games – with a ball" (Sarah's diary). Huxley described this as "organic analogy" (Huxley, 1938, p. 224), which inhibits "our tendency to perform actions in the, to us, familiar, maladjusted way" because:

Mind and body are organically one; and it is therefore inherently likely that, if we can learn the art of conscious inhibition on the physical level, it will help us to acquire and practise the same art on the emotional and intellectual levels.
(Huxley, 1938, p. 222)

Because of her time constraints Florence found that she “actually had to be quite forthright ... and say there was absolutely no alternative but to do it this particular way” (Florence’s interview), which helped the actors achieve the goal but did not help their independent development. She also had to “do a big persuasion number ... even to the extent of having to insist that it was done that way”, implying that she had to provide the solution, rather than find ways for the actors to discover for themselves through using different techniques. Hence time impeded Florence’s creativity in finding ways through the actors’ impasse.

Much of a coach’s remit and expertise lies in helping clients to find ways through their impasse by “sustaining self-efficacy in the face of setbacks” (Locke, 1996, p. 123). This involves strengthening self-efficacy beliefs, that is, “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance” (Bandura, in Pajares, 2002, p. 3). One way to do this is to “improve physical and emotional well-being and reduce negative emotional states” (Parajes, 2002, p. 7). Mary, whose expertise is in coaching musicians to high performance, endorsed this:

Helping the client to get in touch with his or her physical centre, getting a sense of energy flowing from this centre into the external world. Connecting with the environment and others. This usually enables them to be more ‘in the moment’ and shifts the ‘stuckness’. (Mary’s email response)

Both Mary and her client reported the benefit of relating to the client’s Chinese background asking him to perform Tai Qi exercises, which successfully released his impasse. (However, this study did not explore the impact of cultural difference on the learning environment).

Managing goal impasse therefore appears to be an integral part of creating a learning environment where development occurs resulting in independence.

4. Intuition

The connection between intuition and expertise emerged through phrases such as “the best ideas always surface” and Charles’s assumption that he knew they were the best, and his response:

You have to lead people to think in new ways about ... what they’re doing, and trust your intuition. I work very intuitively, I just respond to what they do in the moment. (Charles’s interview)

Intuition has been described as “a part of Tacit Knowledge; a direct knowledge that tells us, what is right or what is not right without using any analytical or logical way of thinking” (Janda and McKenzie, 2004, p. 174). Eraut, describing contexts in which professionals use intuition, such as in problem-solving, decision-making, learning and assessing situations, indicated that “a large part of the synthesis process must have already occurred, perhaps over a series of fairly similar occasions. This ready-to-use ‘action knowledge’ is largely tacit” (Eraut, cited in Atkinson and Claxton, 2003, pp. 258-259). In Claxton’s “family of ‘ways of knowing’”, expertise, learning, judgment, sensitivity, creativity and rumination all emerged from the data provided by the directors and coaches. However, an additional aspect, deep attentiveness, was mentioned by the career coach, Greg:

I must be flexibly receptive ... giving the client 110% of my concentration
(*Greg's email response*).

I suggest this is how our senses identify the clues from which we make intuitive judgments. The co-active coaching style, however, links attending with awareness through our hearing "but it is also listening with all the senses and with our intuition" (Whitworth et al 1998, p. 32). Jenny Rogers, on the other hand, linked intuition with making connections: "sometimes a coach will experience an intuitive moment when an insight appears which is potentially useful to the client", but stressed "the insights and connections that clients make for themselves are part of what coaching is all about" (Rogers, 2004, p. 225).

The importance of intuition as a thread weaving its way through managing process, relationships and goals, indicates a relationship with the learning environment and in Claxton's view "is the bedrock on which all other ways of knowing are constructed" (Atkinson and Claxton, 2003, p. 48).

Conclusion

My research on rehearsals has identified some of the factors involved in creating a learning environment in both theatre rehearsal and coaching: managing processes, relationships and overcoming goal impasse, as well as the influence of intuition. My study has reinforced what coaching and the helping professions have known about relationships, and the importance of rapport.

As far as I am aware, theatre rehearsal was not previously categorised as a learning environment, although aspects of learning, such as learning lines, as part of the actors' expertise have been documented by Noice and Noice (1997). Hence I am opening up an area of future exploration for theatre as well as coaching research.

An off-shoot of this study relates to the current debate regarding the training and accreditation of both directors and coaches. Directors in the past may have progressed from being actors who have received varieties of directing styles, which they either reproduce or reject. Many learned their craft from assisting experienced directors. Charles mentioned that generally:

we're not properly trained, not like in the way that they are in new European countries where they have five or seven years proper training before you even get near a production ... In this country you just call yourself a director and you're out there. (*Charles's interview*)

This is similar to how many coaches enter the coaching profession, bringing with them their own strengths and weaknesses (Berglas, 2002). However, often directors and coaches have developed intuitive skills from their backgrounds.

This paper also highlights that directors have a range of approaches when rehearsing their actors. This reinforced the coaching observation that "Bringing yourself – your own unique signature presence – means that you inhabit the role of coach in ways that no one else does" (O'Neill, 2000, p. 9). The value of individuality of attributes and approach applies to both disciplines. I also submit that coaches could create a more "fruitful soil" (Pirandello, 1993, p.79) for their clients if they were to adopt some of the approaches used by theatre directors in rehearsal. In addition, further research is needed into the applicability of specific theatre techniques to coaching, as well as what can be learnt from other disciplines.

Coaches might find it valuable to consider the effects of having clients selected for them and the conflicts of interest arising from selecting their own. Furthermore, although coaching relationships are built on rapport, some coaches may not have analysed how they establish and develop the rapport during the period of coaching, nor considered the implications of the endings for both parties. A finding from the directors' data was how they helped the actors become independent and develop self-efficacy in proportion to the time constraints. As self-efficacy can be considered one of the goals of coaching, coaches may learn from how the director Charles managed ending the rehearsal period, and consider the implications to their practice.

A further learning point for coaches from this study may be the impact that time has on the intensity, depth and quality of work, as well as how it affects the relationship. Coaches may consider how to stagger information appropriate to the client's personal development.

Directors build a learning environment partly through how they prepare for the rehearsals. Little emerged from the coaches' data or the literature search regarding the complex preparation that conscientious coaches undertake in order to anticipate the clients' needs during a coaching session. Such an approach enriches the learning environment.

The main aims of coaching are achieving goals and overcoming goal impasse. Coaches might learn from the physical techniques exhibited particularly by Charles and have the courage to test out more physical ways of working with clients. Indeed, some coaches trained in NLP or Gestalt methods may already use a kinaesthetic approach (Zinker, 1978).

In this study, directors and coaches drew on their backgrounds to manage their clients' goals. Coaches could reflect on how their backgrounds contribute to their clients' achievement of those goals and research how best they can incorporate applicable techniques, such as physical and verbal strategies into their practice.

The data from this research study highlighted the use of intuition. I suggest that some coaches are in tune with their intuition and move seamlessly through the session responding, supporting or challenging appropriately without recourse to a rigidly held model. Some are less in contact with or confident of their intuitive responses. The importance of intuition could be an area for further professional exploration.

My findings that both the directors and the coaches had to manage similar issues including process, relationships and goal impasse to create a learning environment, using intuition may not be revolutionary, and were based on a small sample. They largely reinforced previous knowledge, but may lead coaches to consider how they can create a more "fruitful soil" to nurture their "living seeds" (Pirandello, 1993, pp. 79–80), their clients.

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